

North Korea rebuilding rocket site

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**
and **KIM TONG-HYUNG**
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea is restoring facilities at a long-range rocket launch site that it dismantled last year as part of disarmament steps, according to foreign experts and a South Korean lawmaker who was briefed by Seoul's spy service.

The finding follows a high-stakes nuclear summit last week between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump that ended without any agreement.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service provided the assessment about the North's Tongchang-ri launch site to lawmakers during a private briefing Tuesday. North Korea didn't immediately respond in its state media.

An article from 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, cited commercial satellite imagery as indicating that efforts to rebuild some structures at the site started sometime between Feb. 16 and March 2.

Dismantling parts of its long-range rocket



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

President Donald Trump meets North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Hanoi, Vietnam.

launch facility was among several steps the North took last year when it entered nuclear talks with the United States and South Korea. North Korea has carried out satellite launches at the site in recent years, resulting in U.N. sanctions over expert claims that

they were disguised tests of banned missile technology.

It wasn't immediately clear how the report might affect nuclear diplomacy. The Trump-Kim summit fell apart because of differences over how much sanction relief

North Korea could win in return for closing its aging main nuclear complex. The U.S. and North Korea accused each other of causing the summit breakdown, but both sides left the door open for future negotiations.

Trump said Kim told him that North Korea would continue to suspend nuclear and missile tests while negotiations are underway, and South Korea and the U.S. announced Sunday that they are eliminating massive springtime military drills and replacing them with smaller exercises in an effort to support the talks.

One of the South Korean lawmakers who attended the intelligence briefing said today that NIS director Suh Hoon said the structures being restored at the launch site include roofs and building doors.

He quoted Suh as saying that the move could be preparation to restart long-range rocket launches if nuclear diplomacy completely collapses, or could be an attempt to add structures that could be dramatically blown up in a show of denuclearization commitment when U.S. inspectors visit if negotiations with Washington go well.

The NIS said it couldn't confirm the report on Suh's briefing.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Sacramento police who killed black man won't be charged

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California's attorney general announced Tuesday that he won't charge two Sacramento police officers who fatally shot an unarmed black man last year, joining a local prosecutor in finding that the officers reasonably believed Stephon Clark had a gun as he moved toward them.

Attorney General Xavier Becerra said the evidence showed the officers had reason to believe their lives were in danger, though investigators found only a cellphone.

Clark, 22, was suspected of vandalism when he was shot seven times on March 18, 2018, and his killing prompted protests in California's capital city and across the U.S.

New demonstrations followed Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert's decision this weekend not to charge the officers, with 84 people arrested Monday. People who had participated said at Tuesday's City Council meeting that police were overly aggressive, pushing and sometimes striking protesters and ramming them with bikes.

US plans to lift protections for gray wolves

BILLINGS, Mont. — U.S. wildlife officials plan to lift protections for gray wolves across the Lower 48 states, a move certain to re-ignite the legal battle over a predator that's rebounding in some regions and running into conflicts with farmers and ranchers.

Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt was expected to announce the proposal today during a speech before a wildlife conference in Denver, U.S. Fish and Wildlife spokesman Gavin Shire said.

The decision to lift protections is based on gray wolves successfully recovering from widespread extermination last century, Shire said. Long despised by farmers and ranchers, wolves were shot, trapped and poisoned out of existence in most of the U.S. by the mid-20th century.

They received endangered species protections in 1975, when there were about 1,000 left, only in northern Minnesota. Now more than 5,000 of the animals live in the contiguous U.S. Hundreds are now killed annually by hunters.

More migrants crossing US southern border in large groups

WASHINGTON — The number of migrant families crossing the southwest border is again breaking records, and the crush is overwhelming border agents and straining facilities, officials said.

More than 76,000 migrants crossed the U.S.-Mexico border last month, more than double the number from the same period last year. Most were families coming in ever-increasingly large groups — there were 70 groups of more than 100 people in the past few months, and they cross illegally in extremely rural locations with few agents and staff. There were only 13 large groups during the previous budget year, and only two the year before.

The system "is well beyond capacity, and remains at the breaking point," U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan said.

While fewer people overall are being apprehended crossing the border illegally each year — about 400,000 over the last budget year compared with the high of 1.6 million in 2000, the increasing numbers are alarming, officials said.

FDA chief Gottlieb steps down after nearly 2 years

WASHINGTON — Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb is stepping down after nearly two years leading the agency's response to a host of public health challenges, including the opioid epidemic, rising drug prices and underage vaping.

Gottlieb cited "the challenge of being apart from my family" in Connecticut when announcing his departure Tuesday in a note to FDA staff. He'll leave next month.

President Donald Trump tapped Gottlieb in 2017 to "cut red tape" at the FDA. But Gottlieb bucked expectations by pushing the agency to expand its authorities in several key ways, including an unprecedented effort to make cigarettes less addictive by requiring lower nicotine levels.

The 46-year-old physician and former conservative pundit advanced his agenda while managing to maintain the support of the president, Republicans and key Democrats in Congress.



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